

Boston College, Department of Sociology
Spring, 2007

SC001.02: Introductory Sociology
Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00am - 10:15am
Gasson Hall, Rm. 209

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 1:00 - 3:00pm at Starbucks in McElroy Hall
And by appointment

Texts: *Sociology In Our Times, Revised 6th Ed, by Diana Kendall*
Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams, by Alfred Lubrano
Born To Buy, by Juliet Schor

Course Organization:

We will begin with the background, history and development of the discipline of sociology. To that end, we will begin with the broad foundations of sociology, move to the specific practices and applications of the field, and then look ahead from where we are to where we are going as a society and as a discipline. Most importantly, I want you to be able to not just understand the discipline of sociology, but to be able to apply this knowledge to your everyday lives and develop a better understanding of the importance of the social world in which you live.

Course Objectives:

Sociology is a fluid practice - it is always changing, reaching back to it's past and moving ahead to it's future. Sociology, like society, is never static. So, the course objectives are simple:

- Explore the history and background of the discipline of sociology; to look at theory and practice their combination in the form of the 'sociological imagination'
- To make the distinction between 'common sense' and sociological analysis; to challenge what we take for granted in society and reveal the interplay and tension between the individual and the society;
- To develop a 'sociological imagination' in practice;
- To generate a foundation for the understanding and criticism not only of a discipline, but of the social world in which we all inhabit.

One way to look at this is to attempt to answer the question: Why is Robinson Crusoe Impossible?

Course Requirements:

You will be required to participate, both physically and intellectually, in classroom activities. This means that readings will be completed by the date they are assigned,

papers will be completed in full and on time, and you will participate in class discussions.

Reading: There are three reading sources for this course: a textbook and two examples of sociological research. These are all readings of sociological works, many by practicing sociologists. We will begin with theory and move to methods, and then areas of practice. Some of the readings will be challenging and time consuming. Some weeks the readings will be heavy and others light. Regardless, you are expected to have completed the readings by the assigned class. Often, I will make reference to these readings in class, and as often as possible we will be discussing them in class. It is imperative that you come prepared.

Writing: In order to understand, appreciate, and apply the knowledge generated in the course, you must be able to process it and 'talk' about it. The best way to do this is to write. At the beginning of each new section, you may be asked to submit a brief (one page) paper describing to me what you think the topic is. For example, the first paper asks you to tell me what you think sociology is and why we should study it (more at the end of syllabus.)

There will be one exam, one paper and a final project. The exam will consist of a number of multiple choice questions and an essay. The essay is to be completed in class on the day of the exam. The paper will ask you to take sociology and find it in your everyday lives; the papers will require you to take on sociological theory and practice (praxis), apply these ideas in your own life, and explore their meanings, consequences, and uses. More on this as we go.

Rather than a cumulative final or extensive research paper, your final will be a sociological Scavenger Hunt. For the Scavenger Hunt, you will be asked to go out into the world and look for indicators of Race, Class, Gender, Culture, Power, etc. You will be given a list from which to find examples of this in society. Once located, you are to provide an analysis/explanation based on what we have learned over the course of the semester. Do not plan on missing this final! You have had plenty of time to make travel arrangements around your finals schedule. As a result, I will not look favourably on requests for an extension, for re-scheduling a final or giving a make-up.

Again, more on this as we go.

An important note on academic honesty: I will not tolerate any plagiarism in this course. All work must be yours and yours alone. This applies to cheating on an exam, lifting the work of authors without proper citation, or attempts to rearrange words and phrases and claim them as your own. A word to the wise: you do not know what I read, watch, or otherwise know. Take the time and do the work as assigned. The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) has very specific regulations regarding academic honesty issues, and I will obey their directives. For example, if you willingly and knowingly commit an act of plagiarism, you can be expelled from the College. For a more detailed review of this policy, visit the A&S web page online. I take this issue seriously, and so should you.

At the end of the syllabus, you will find the first assignment. This is due in class on the first day of lecture.

If you have any questions regarding the syllabus or class, let me know.

Attendance/Speaking: Sociology is an intriguing and contentious discipline. Often, you will want to react to what we are reading and discussing. You will have more than ample opportunity to do so. This is not exclusively a lecture course. You are expected to actively participate in class discussions and activities. This practice will make the semester all that more worthwhile for those involved.

If you are uncomfortable about speaking in public, you will be given other opportunities to participate. For example, you can meet with me outside of class to talk. You can e-mail me your thoughts and reactions and I will try to integrate them into the course. But I cannot stress the importance of exchange and dialogue in a course of this nature. As often as possible, we will open up the classroom to small group discussions and just 'talking'.

I cannot emphasize this aspect of the class enough. Approximately 10% of your final course grade is based on participation and attendance. 'A' students have received a 'B' in this class because they did not take this requirement seriously enough. Simply attending every class is not enough: you must participate in the class. Let me also add this: I will not grade you down if your opinion differs from mine, from your classmates, or from our authors. Quite the contrary. You are students at one of the top university's in the country, and you all possess interesting ideas and information. All that I require from you are intelligent, informed responses. For example, do not say "that's stupid!" unless you can tell me why.

If any student has a disability or condition that prevents them from fulfilling any of the above goals, please come and see me within the first two weeks of class so we can negotiate an appropriate arrangement for the completion of assignments.

Grading: Weights and Values

Instructor/Discretionary/Participation	10%
Exam	25%
Paper	30%
Final Project	35%

Please take note of the weighting of the assessments. Each assignment counts more as your familiarity and mastering of the material increases. A good grade on the exam does not necessarily mean a good course grade. Conversely, a poor exam grade will not doom you to a poor course grade.

Instructor/Discretionary Points include attendance, participation, the occasional reaction/opinion paper, etc. These will be awarded at the end of the semester, and attached to your final grade. Most of these points will be assessed based on your 'performance' and participation in the class. Take advantage of it.

The paper and final will be graded on how well you integrate readings, text, and discussion materials, as well as outside sources. Organization and focus of thoughts will be analyzed here. Any paper that has not been spell-checked and proofread will be returned for editing. Once returned, you will have one day to re-submit the paper. The late policy will apply if the paper is not returned to me within one day.

See above description on writing for clarification.

Papers are due on the date indicated on the syllabus, at the beginning of class and in person. I will not accept papers that have been e-mailed to me regardless of the reason or circumstance. If you turn in your paper at the end of class, the late penalty will apply. 10 points will be deducted for every day the paper is late, including weekends. It is unfair to the other students in class to turn in late work with the expectation that it will be graded equally. If you are aware of a problem or issue that may prevent you from turning in your paper on time, let me know as soon as possible. Extensions will only be given in cases of extreme circumstance and must be arranged prior to the draft date. Once the rough draft deadline has passed, I will not be granting extensions.

Required Readings:

Text: Sociology In Our Time, Revised 5th Edition. Diana Kendall; Thomson/Wadsworth Publishers (Appears as **T** on syllabus)

Born To Buy. Juliet Schor; Scribner , Publisher. (Appears as **BTB** on syllabus)

Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams. Alfred Lubrano; Wiley, Publisher. (Appears as **L** on syllabus.)

In addition to the above readings, there will be occasion to attend outside lectures, films, etc. As a result of schedule and time constraints, at different points in the semester your presence may be requested at the library to view films. Although attendance is not required, it is encouraged. These films will be on reserve in the library and you are required to view them. Some titles may be available at your local video store, at Netflix, or online and it is more than acceptable to rent and view them on your own time. Just let me know that you have seen them with a brief note or e-mail on their content. Arrangements and specifics for the accomplishment of this task will be discussed in class.

A Few Final Notes:

Although it may seem like quite a lot of work, it will hopefully be enjoyable and informative for all. This syllabus serves as a general guide for the course of the semester. In a sense, it is an agreement between you and I regarding how we will navigate this semester together. As such, by choosing to remain in this course, you agree to all of the above requirements and stipulations.

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus at any time, but with fair and appropriate warning. Additionally, I am more than open to including or deleting certain articles or topics if you, the students, feel strongly about them. There may be times where a certain current event or pop culture phenomenon may appear that will lend itself to this course. Should that happen, there will be more than ample opportunity to set aside the days schedule and explore that occurrence in more depth. If there is a topic that you would like to bring into the course, or explore more deeply, let me know and I'll see what I can do.

There will be absolutely no beepers or cell phones on during class. They must be shut off once you walk into this classroom. Not on vibrate, but turned completely off.

Beepers and cell phones may be a necessity of our modern era, but they are immensely distracting for me and you. (At some point this semester, we will discuss why cell phones and beepers are such an annoyance.) I appreciate your cooperation on this last item.

Finally, a more personal note. I believe in a safe, open, democratic classroom. I want and encourage your participation not only in the classroom activities and discussions, but also in how this course will carry itself out and in what we learn. You all have a voice, and I want to hear it. I want all of your voices to count and to be heard. As with all freedoms, there are responsibilities. You must take an active part in this process, voice your thoughts and opinions, take an active role in the outcome of this course. You are being asked not to sit in a class and read what I want you to read, think what I want you to think. You are being asked to be an active participant in what you learn, how you learn, etc. My responsibility is to you, to carry out this course (as much as I am able) in ways that meet the goals of the class as well as the needs of each of you. This will only work if we all put forth the effort.

All of you bring your own unique perspectives and experiences to this material, and I encourage that. Many of the topics we will cover and explore can become very personal. I want you to feel safe in this classroom to discuss that. Whatever is said or written in this class stays in this class. No one should feel oppressed or stifled because of gender, race, creed, class or sexual orientation. This class will be a community effort.

Thank You.

Assignment 1:

In your own words, answer the following questions:

- 1) Why are you taking this course?
- 2) What do you want to get out of this course?
- 3) What do you want to know more about?
- 4) How do you learn?
- 5) What can I do to best facilitate your learning?
- 6) What can the class do to best facilitate your learning?